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Series Review

Program: *Awesome Adventures*
Shows reviewed: Puerto Rico
Dallas
Program length: 30 minutes

Awesome Adventures is an educational and informational adventure travel program that targets the 13 to 16 year old age group, but is also a highly entertaining program for a more general audience. With a host and the use of young guides from a specific locale, it is ideal for the “tween/teen” market.

This program is fast paced, and provides information which encompasses many aspects of the location. It is produced in a contemporary style, and features both historical and cultural information, in addition to an action adventure. The introduction about the specific food, music, geography, history and environmental issues as well as popular recreational activities of the locale, make for a most entertaining program.

The host Mystro, probably in his mid twenties, is engaging, and his delivery is both gritty and welcoming for an audience used to YouTube videos. Coupled with a very conversational style is the MTV shooting technique. The program’s opening is visually engaging, featuring scenes of upcoming adventures in the form of a teaser for the audience. In the program about Puerto Rico, the teen team provides some humor while also detailing history. The visualization is excellent—camera angles and action shots make the viewer feel a part of the experience. The use of subjective camera angles further contributes to the “feeling of being there.” The natural sounds on location further emphasize the on-site experience for the viewer. The historical content grounds the program, framing location and history of the region for the viewer. The music selection adds to the overall experience. Along with some creative camera angles, the editing is representative of an exceptional craft. The viewer becomes immersed into the history and flavor of the location in a short period of time, which is an important part of the learning experience. The show always combines fun with facts. For instance, explaining the science behind the rainforest, and then introducing a segment connected to this with body sliding and rock climbing, entertains viewers while educating them about a new culture and community.

The walking tour of Old San Juan on the second day provides additional exposure to the area. The history is integrated with a humorous piece that focuses on snow cones. Another compelling aspect of the program is the integration of a language lesson. The 360 degree camera shot during the discussion of the artifact in the fort gives the viewer total exposure to the statue. If they cannot touch it on location, the camera work and the conversation will bring it to the viewer. As is the case with the first sequence, the visualization and storytelling of this scene are excellent, and the host is effective in making the viewer feel a part of the story. Through the conversation about the statue the viewer learns about the city, its artifacts and culture. The scene in the cave is well shot and uses lighting to dramatize the location. Another interesting aspect of this segment is highlighting that you are unable to talk on a cell phone in a cave. For this particular audience (13-16) this is a very important aspect of the story because they are used to communicating from every imaginable location, and it is rare that they would find themselves somewhere without the ability to text or dial.

The program's diverse segments are another program strength. Pacing throughout the show is excellent, and will certainly keep the attention of the teen viewer. At the end of the show, to provide some closure, visuals include highlights of the entire episode, reinforcing the most important educational points.

The "Awesome Adventures-Dallas," episode further highlights the impact of this series in that the storytelling again moves effectively through several genres from history to action to entertainment. It seems that it is the "extreme sport" that really draws the viewer into the program. This particular episode features bungee jumping, and this extreme sports' fantasy is played out for the viewer in a very captivating way. Again, the camerawork is outstanding and Mystro, the host, certainly draws the viewer into the content, by leaping into the air and dropping down. He is street smart, knowledgeable about the history of the city, can relate to teens on their level and has found a style that works.

The lesson in bovine grooming was a little known fact contributing to the history of the state fair. Another very impressive aspect of this series is that as the host narrates, the people of the city also tell the story, which is much more compelling than a third person narration. Natural sound also plays a significant role in this particular episode and is a very compelling aspect of the program. Too often producers fill time and space with script for the host to read. Music transitions and natural sound provide a sense of "being there."

Overall, the visualization of this program is very effective, and the host is not only charming, but colorful and perfect for the target audience. His sense of humor is present throughout both episodes, and his ability to relate to his audience, as well as to the local guides and other people introduced in the show, is most impressive. He is colorful and meets the dominant target audience (tweens/teens) at their level.

Summary:

Target audience for content, learning modules and style

- Tweens/teens – 13 to 16 year olds

Genre:

- Educational/ Informational

Learning Objectives:

- Learn about other cities or countries including all aspects of the culture
- Recognize connections between past and present
- Appreciate the nature of geographical space
- Understand the importance of an action-adventure experience in a new environment

Outcomes for students

- Develop working knowledge of other countries or cities and their cultures
- Compare and contrast one's own society to other cultures
- Understand the historical construction of similarities and differences between regions or nations

Sincerely,

Betsy Leebron Tutelman
Senior Faculty Advisor to the Provost